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ABSTRACT

Providing directions and illustrations for making a number of different kinds of puppets, this teaching guide points out possible uses of puppets for engaging children, both handicapped and nonhandicapped, in creative processes in which they can feel a sense of accomplishment. Directions and materials are outlined for making paper bag, stick, sack, paper-mache/styrofoam, and vegetable puppets. Additional guidelines are provided on what to do with puppets, dealing with children with specific disabilities, and puppet theatres. (DS)

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MAKING AND USING PUPPETS

Allow me to introduce a very special friend--Reginald. Reginald is special for many reasons; one of the most apparent, he is a puppet. At first glance, Reginald is merely polyfoam, felt and cotton glued together; but when he starts to talk, he starts to live, and thus, has important effects on those around him. Reginald, who accompanied me for storytelling to fifty parks, hospitals, and schools, one summer, elicited responses from all who saw him. He was a character everyone loved, one with whom they sang, talked, played games, and learned. Reginald was not a real person, yet he was very alive, and gave children a means to respond freely. Upon seeing one puppet show, each child in a group of deaf children wrote a story to fit the characters and their actions.

Puppets provide a unique medium for a teacher or leader to work with children of all backgrounds and conditions. Puppetry is increasingly being used in therapy, guidance, and rehabilitation programs and has proved successful with physically handicapped, mentally retarded, emotionally disturbed, and learning disabled children, as well as nonhandicapped children.

By making a puppet him/herself, a child can engage in a creative process in which he/she can feel a sense of accomplishment. With many varieties of puppets from which to chose, it should be fairly easy to pick one that any child can make successfully. Reginald was quite easy to make and has been used in several children's workshops with good results.

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Puppets to Make

Reginald Puppet

Materials:

Two circles polyfoam (½" thickness)

Contact Cement

Scissors

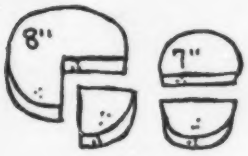
Stapler

Felt circle

Scraps of material (felt, cotton, fake fur)

Cardboard circle folded in half

Directions:

1. 

Cut one quarter out of 8" circle. Cut 7" circle in half.

2.

With contact cement, glue cut edges of 8" circle. Pull together to form a cone shape.

3.

With seam in back, staple front side of the cone to one half of the card board circle.

4.

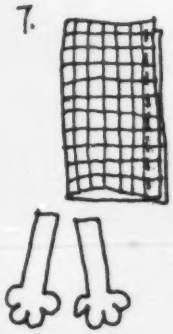
Now, staple one half of the 7" circle to the bottom half of the cardboard circle. Be sure to leave the straight side unstapled!

5.

Glue felt circle to cardboard.

6.

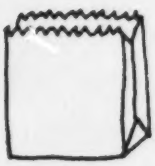
The rest is up to your imagination! Use felt for the eyes, left-over polyfoam scraps for the nose, yarn or fake fur for hair. (These are just suggestions. Its your puppet!)

7. 

To make a body, simply take a 16" square piece of material, fold in half, and staple a seam. Then, staple the top opening around the neck of the puppet. Cut out arms and staple to body.

Paper Bag Puppet

Materials:



1 paper bag (flat-bottomed)

Construction Paper

Glue

Scissors

Scraps of Material (felt, cotton, burlap)

Yarn

Directions:

This type of puppet is quite simple to construct. By turning the paper bag upside-down, believe it nor not, the puppet is nearly complete!

Simply use brightly colored construction paper or material to make eyes, ears, a mouth and nose on the bottom of the paper bag. Hair can be made from yarn or cotton.

Stick Puppet

Materials:

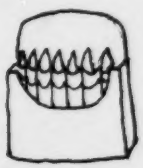
2 paper plates

1 popsicle STICK

Construction Paper

Stapler

Glue


Crayons

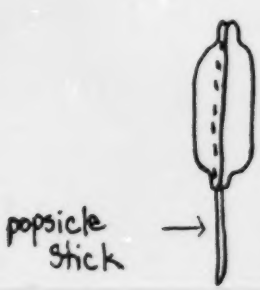
Scraps of Material (felt, cotton, velvet)

Directions:

To make the head of this puppet, bring the two paper plates together and staple around the edges--have undersides of the plates facing out.

Construction paper can be used for eyes, ears, nose, and mouth or an alternative to this would be simply to color features onto the face with crayons.

With glue, secure the popsicle stick to the plates so that a handle is provided to maneuver the puppet.



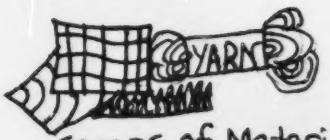
Sock Puppet

Materials:

1 sock

Buttons

Needle and Thread

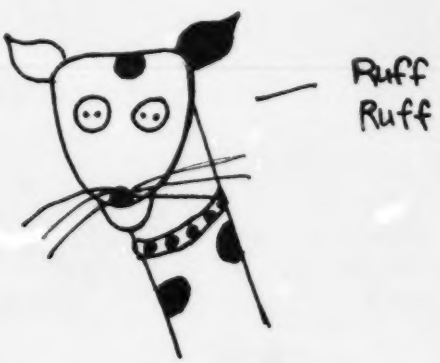


Scraps of Material (felt, fur, cotton, yarn)

Directions:

Place your hand inside the sock so that the toe of the sock comes between the thumb and the rest of your fingers.

This forms the mouth of the sock puppet to which a tongue or felt lining can be sewn or glued for emphasis. To make the puppet complete, simply add buttons for eyes and whatever materials you chose for hair, ears, and decoration.



Paper-Mache Styrofoam Puppet

Materials:

1 styrofoam ball

Paint and Brushes

Paper Mache

Scraps of Material (felt, cotton, yarn)

Directions:

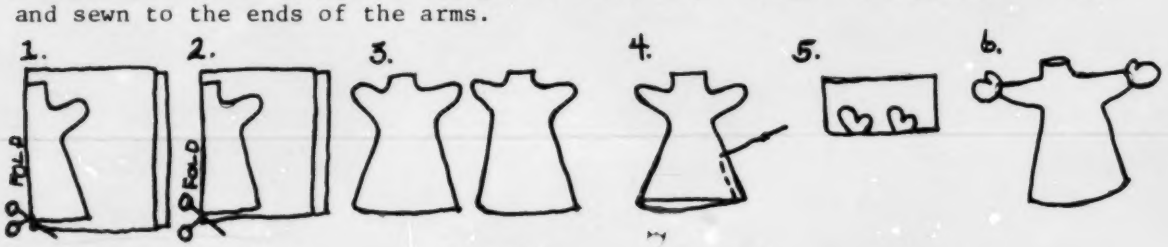
To make this puppet, take a styrofoam ball and with the end of a paint brush, make a finger hole so that your foreginger can fit inside up to the middle knuckle.

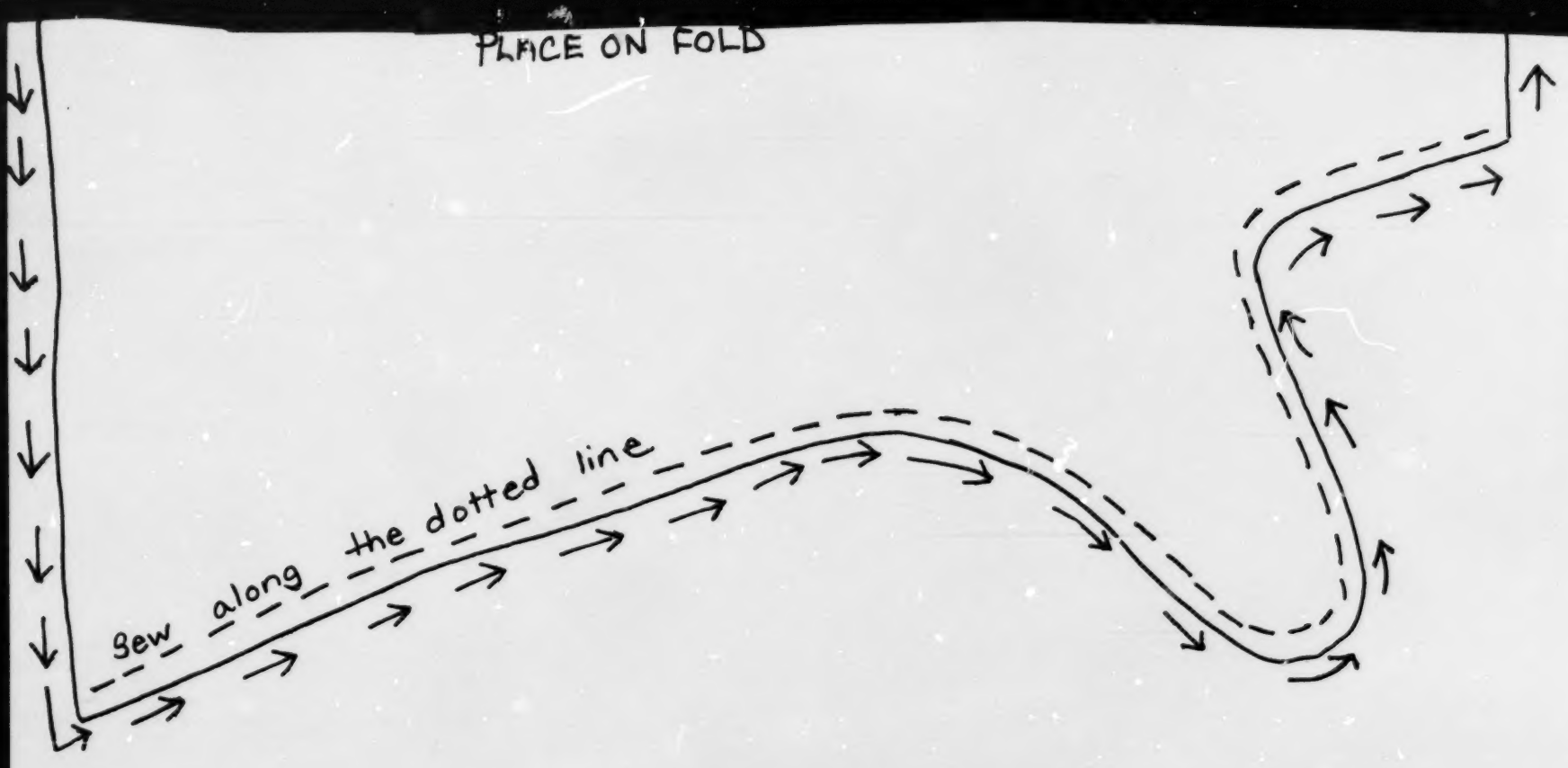
Next, apply the paper mache covering to the styrofoam ball--always leave the hole uncovered--and mold into the shape of a face.

When the paper mache is dry and hard, skin, lips, and eyes may be painted onto the surface. By using fake hair, fur or yard, hair may be made for the puppet.

A variation on this theme makes for a simpler puppet. By using the styrofoam ball as described above, buttons, cloth, or construction paper cut into different shapes can be pinned or glued directly onto the styrofoam ball (instead of paper mache) to make a face.

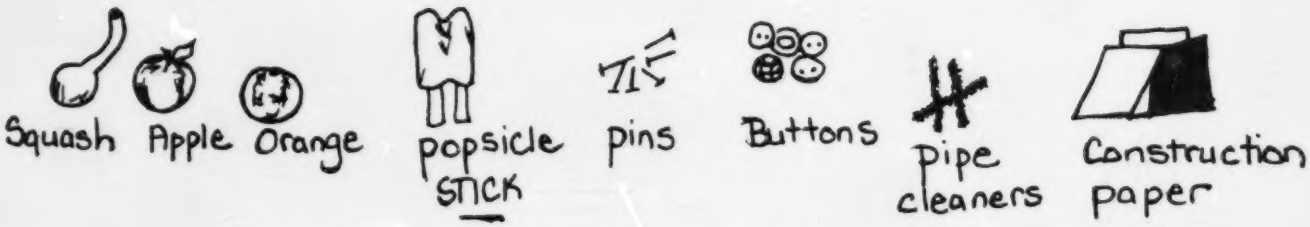
If a body is desired, the pattern on the next page may be used. Fold a piece of material in half and place the pattern on the fold as indicated. Cut along the arrows to make the front of the body. Repeat the process for the back. Sew the two pieces together leaving the neck and bottom open. Turn inside out and attach the neck opening to the neck of the puppet using glue. Hands may be made with pieces of felt and sewn to the ends of the arms.




PLACE ON FOLD
Sew along the dotted line

Vegetable Puppet

Materials:



Directions:

Perhaps you don't realize that you can go directly to the refrigerator for a puppet! Just take a peek into the vegetable and fruit bin and see that what was always seen as a yellow squash, in reality, is an elephant! Follow these instructions for further proof. Take the squash out of the refrigerator! The longer, thinner part of the squash will be the trunk.

By pinning eyes and ears--made from buttons and construction paper--onto the head and adding tusks made from pipe cleaners, behold, an elephant! Next, push the popsicle stick into the squash where the neck should be, for maneuvering purposes.

Any number of characters can be created using a variety of fruits or vegetables,

Right, Captain Apple?

What to do with Puppets

A finished puppet has a blank personaltiy for a child to personalize with his/her own ideas, fears, dreams, and sense of humor. A puppet becomes almost human as a tool of self-expression; a nonthreatening way to let aggressions and fears emerge, for it is not the child who is afraid, but the puppet!

- One way to initate activity among a group of children and puppets is to have all the puppets dance to lively music--or perhaps sing a song together. This type of activity breaks the ice so that each child becomes more comfortable with his/her new friend.

- A group activity such as planning a story for puppets to dramatize can encourage the development of social and communication skills as children work as a team. In a program where children with mental and physical disabilities are mainstreamed into a regular classroom, this is an excellent way for different children to relate to each other by having a common goal--presenting a finished story play or skit.

- For the teacher, or group leader, storytelling can be greatly enhanced by the presence of a friendly puppet. The puppet can be an aid to children in understanding a story by talking with them about it. Breaking in at appropriate times during the story sequence enables the puppet to involve the children and, therefore, spark their interest by asking questions like, "What do you think will happen next?" or "Do you think Snow White should eat the apple?" When asking these questions, the puppet provides an opportunity for children to create new and different endings to familiar stories. All this adds up to a story hour that is both exciting and a full learning experience.

- If a child is entering the hospital for the first time, and perhaps experiencing an operation, a puppet show depicting characters in a hospital--doctors, nurses, patients--and how they relate to each other, can be quite beneficial in alleviating some of his/her fears and anxieties in this new and rather frightening experience.

- Have the student become the teacher! For example, if there are history stories to be learned during the year, assign, or have each child choose, a different character as his/her own to create through puppetry. As each story, or historical figure is covered during the course of the year, the matching puppet can be presented, tell about himself, and perhaps act with another puppet.

These examples may all be adapted to suit children of different ages, conditions, and backgrounds. All have been used with a variety of children in different situations with much success and much fun.

Specific Disabilities

For visually impaired children, making puppets provides a tactile experience from which they learn shape and form. By using materials, such as cotton balls, burlap, and yarn, a learning experience in distinguishing textures is accomplished. Attending a puppet show adds to these overall experiences. As opposed to feeling left out because they cannot see the show, they, instead, enjoy the story with better understanding of puppetry. Allow each child to touch and feel puppet characters; they want to know what the big bad wolf looks like!

Following in this vein, while a blind child will not feel removed from a puppet show experience, neither will the child who is deaf. As mentioned earlier, watching a puppet show prompted a group of deaf children to write their own stories fitting actions and characters they saw. Amazingly enough, these children were not asked to do this but were inspired by the experience itself. What better or more delightful way to encourage growth of language and communication skills in a hearing impaired child!

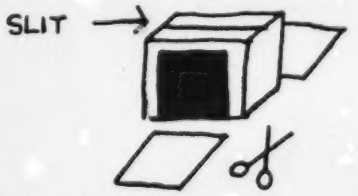
If you hesitate to introduce this activity to a child with an amputation, hesitate no longer! No rule says puppets must be made by hands! Each activity can be performed with skillful feet if necessary, and of course, using a prosthesis one accomplishes all that hands do.

Quadraplegic children need not be excluded from an experience such as this. Head sticks and mouth sticks make it possible for these individuals to paint, draw, glue, and maneuver puppets. Attaching a completed stick puppet to a hat for a quadraplegic child to wear enables him/her to maneuver and voice the puppet simultaneously.

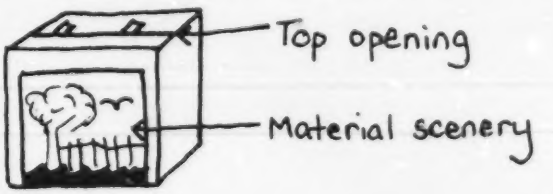
Puppet Theaters

Puppets can easily be used without a stage. While storytelling, the teacher will discover that even though the puppet is obviously being manipulated and voiced by him/her, this will not detract from its effectiveness or the childrens' enjoyment. However, if a stage is desired or needed, there are several simple and inexpensive ways to make one.

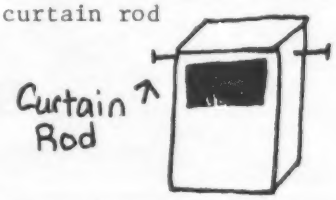
. A cardboard box (approximately 2' x 2') makes a very adequate puppet theater. Cut a large square out of the front and back of the box and slit across the top. Next, hang a piece of material which can be decorated for scenery through the opening at the top of the box and attach with tape.



The theater is complete and ready for a puppet show to begin with scenery changes possible.



Make a theater from a discarded refrigerator box. Cut off the back and you have a front and two sides. Cut out the front for the proscenium opening. Backdrops should hang about six inches from the front frame of the theater. A curtain rod through the sides of the theater provides something from which to hang a backdrop.



- Dutch doors provide a ready-made puppet stage in many schools and parks.
- A card table turned on its side can also become a quick and easy stage.
- An old sheet or blanket pinned across a doorway is another easy, make-do stage.

Ways to use puppets with all children seem endless. Whether working with groups of children or children on an individual basis, handicapped children or nonhandicapped children, mainstreamed or not, puppets hold an important place in learning and achieving. These ways vary with each teacher and group of children. However used, puppets provide an inventive and fun way to learn and grow.